THE FINAL JUDGEMENT IN "MONSTER CULTURE"

SUE BAHK

> "In this distribution of functions, the scholar is the delegated intellect. In the right state he is Man Thinking. In the degenerate state, when the victim of society, he tends to become a mere thinker, or, still worse, the parrot of other men's thinking."
>
> —Ralph Waldo Emerson

It is rare for a writer to put his or her theory at risk by exposing its secret vulnerability, to set out on that fragile, shaky wooden bridge stretching across a chasm—the gap between the two cliffs of understanding. Daunting is the possibility of trust collapsing. One would be a fool to turn one's idea against oneself. Yet, Jeffrey Cohen leads readers of his essay, "Monster Culture," on this bridge of uncertainty when he poses a polarizing question that could either make the readers believe him completely or doubt his entire theory: "Do monsters really exist?" (20).

In "Monster Culture," Cohen extensively discusses and analyzes monsters in connection with the cultures from which they rise. "What I will propose here by way of a first foray, as entrance into this book of monstrous content, is a sketch of a new *modus legendi*: a method of reading cultures from the monsters they engender," he begins (3). Maintaining the formal tone of an academic, he contends that monsters rise at the "crossroads" of a culture, where differences emerge and anxiety heightens. The monster is an embodiment of difference—of any quality, whether it be ideological, cultural, sexual, or racial, that inspires fear and uncertainty in its creators (7). The monster is frequently a "disturbing hybrid" that defies categorization—its hybridity rebels against nature (6). And though there are fictional monsters, real people can become monsters too. In order to bring "freaks" under control, those who abide by the standard code of the day impart monstrous identities to those who do not. Anxiety is what breeds them and defines their existence. Thus locating the origin of monsters, Cohen strives to reveal our culture's values and tendencies. For the vast majority of the essay, the monster is simply the subject of our examination, an otherworldly creature under our scrutiny.

It is when Cohen approaches the end of his essay that he adds another dimension to the monster's entity and exposes its vulnerability:

> Perhaps it is the time to ask the question that always arises when the monster is discussed seriously (the inevitability of the question a symptom of the deep anxiety about what is and what should be thinkable, an anxiety that the process of monster theory is destined to raise): Do monsters really exist?

Surely they must, for if they did not, how could we? (20)

In an essay in which monsters are central, he chooses to investigate in his final paragraphs whether monsters even exist after all. This query boldly shifts the focus away from the discussion of his monster theory and introduces a counter argument, pushing readers to either end of the spectrum of their belief in monster theory. *They* will have to choose whether monsters exist, and whether they will believe or disregard Cohen's work. Pressing his readers to decide, Cohen places his readers in this foggy gap between the two extremes in order to, paradoxically, eliminate their indecision about his theory.

From the first page—in fact, the first sentence—Cohen seems to be building up to this eruption, the *boom* moment. Grave and rather stiff in his tone, he is full of purpose—"What I propose here . . . is a sketch of a new *modus legendi*" (3). By starting with a rather abrupt announcement, he lays out his objective plainly and explicitly as he launches into a "foray," a sudden raid, to destroy the protective walls of convention and comfort (3). The risk he takes in unveiling his argument's potential flaws and testing the readers' judgments will bring forth the anxiety that permeates not only his essay, but also people's minds. This sense that a quest is underway reappears in the diction of his concluding passage. His language and tone, departing from the academic study of monsters, demonstrates a serious yet playfully provoking attitude toward the audience. We see the subtle, ironic sense of humor that he has well hidden under the seriousness and technicalities of an academic. Imagine him smirking as he encourages, "Surely they must, for if they did not, how could we?"—content that he has the power to spark trouble and uneasiness in his readers. But to arrive at this point, he detoured from his scholarly discussion of his theses.

Let's return to the beginning of the passage. The word "perhaps" marks a careful interjection that brings a pause to the flow of his ideas. It is a gentle motion to stop and think. The following phrase "it is time" displays Cohen's anticipation: he has been building up toward this moment. Thus pulling his readers out of the text and back into reality, he raises the central question: "Do monsters really exist?" (20). The answer to this question holds the key to his theory's credibility. Can we trust his theory, which is wholly based on the assumption that monsters do exist? His answer is a testament to his confidence, for he replies, "Surely they must" (20). Sly and expectant, his response is not only a challenge to the conventional understanding that monsters are forms of our imagination, but also a design to trigger a little indignation from the readers. For example, the word "surely" gives a sense that his answer is an obvious one that "surely" everyone should know (though he provides no more concrete evidence than his emphatic interpretation of common sense). Indeed, Cohen's use of "must" suggests that there is no other rational answer that can be true. With these subtly forceful word choices, he appears to challenge readers' knowledge or, more importantly, their pride in what they know. We can start to see here that Cohen is aiming at a specific part of

the subconscious—the ego—that will allow him access and even control a reader's sense of what is real.

Cohen demands a definite answer, a conviction—whether it be disregard or trust—for vacillating on that unsteady bridge is a source of anxiety in itself. But under the appearance of a perfectly probable motive lies a more intricate pursuit. By calling the question's inevitability a "symptom of the deep anxiety about what is and what should be thinkable," he challenges his audience's scope of thought (20). Notice his inclusion of the word "should." The clear, crucial distinction between what "is" and what "should" be thinkable serves to differentiate the mundane, average thinking ability from the sophisticated intellect Cohen requires from his readers. It is his way of coyly, maybe even with a hint of haughtiness, asking, "Can you handle my ideas?" In an ever-so-charming manner, he prods our ego—something that we so treasure that we will go to extreme lengths to save it from damage or belittlement. With his suave patronization as the bait, he is fishing for our overprotectiveness of our egos.

And as Cohen's prey, the readers may feel their ego threatened and become perceptibly anxious. When Cohen calls "the inevitability of the question a symptom of the deep anxiety," "symptom" is also a carefully chosen word that appropriately renders a disease-like quality. According to this notion, anxiety is a contagious epidemic—one that takes over people's reason and causes them to constantly feel insecure, leading them to eventually produce monsters. Interestingly, anxiety in Cohen's text is a revisited subject—a constantly reoccurring term—that mirrors the prevalent, lingering nature of a disease. It is ironic that his own monster theory, which analyzes the anxieties that create monsters in the first place, might itself engender anxiety—both his and his readers'. The anxiety can rise simply from the essay's content (a solemn discourse on monster), which Cohen says inevitably prompts his central query, or it can also come from ambivalence regarding the question (of the monster's existence) itself. "Monster Culture" brims with uncertainty and tension.

In many ways, then, reading "Monster Culture" is not just reading but rather thinking and questioning, and all the while coping with anxiety. Fueling the anxiety, Cohen establishes a dependent relationship between monsters and us. According to the rhetorical question in "Surely they must, for if they did not, how could we?" we cannot exist if monsters do not (20). But consequently, if their existence equates to our existence, does that not mean *we* are monsters? Here is the epitome of the break between thinkable and unthinkable. We all are monsters, and in choosing whether or not one can accept that fact is the key to complete comprehension of Cohen's theory—and deciding on which end of the bridge we will land. In fact, with the question, Cohen allows the readers to actively experience the making of a monster. As Cohen says, we detest monsters. So, we naturally don't want to *be* monsters ourselves—or casted out as different or freakish. But when Cohen suggests that we are all monsters, a non-monster (who is thus unlike all others) becomes a monster nonetheless. With this prospect, anxiety turns into panic, and as a result, his question

"If they did not, how could we?" acts as reverse psychology: rather than be appalled, we are tempted to swiftly accept Cohen's bait and concur, "Yes, you are right. I, too, am a monster." We don't want to be left behind on that bridge. When the essay ends and the bridge falls, we could either plummet down and flounder in that bottomless gulf of uncertainty and anxiety—with no one to pull you out, to persuade you to either side. Or, we could escape the easy way: follow his lead.

Thus, Cohen's concluding inquiry was not a question at all, but a powerful shove to his readers toward believing him completely. Though in a glance, he appears to be simply questioning the existence of monsters, he is really testing the readers' level of thought and urging others to question everything and everyone (even him, the author, and themselves). But, even in this, there is deception because he in fact is pushing the readers to the side the bridge that corresponds to trust and belief in him. By speaking to the readers' egos, he actually makes readers, afraid of humiliation, want to agree with him. And with the suggestion that everyone is a monster, he entices them to accept it as a plainly apparent reality. Rather than putting his theory at risk, Cohen has convinced his readers—by causing their anxiety to rule over their reason—to *want* to be on his side even if they aren't necessarily his believer. Thus, the vulnerability exposed isn't that of his theory, but that of his readers. "Monster Culture," then, is Cohen's lonely battle against "un-thought," which ironically, and unfortunately, shows the prevalence and inevitability of it (3).

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THE DEFINITIVELY NON-STANDARD ENGLISH OF DAVID FOSTER WALLACE

JACK KLEMPAY

In his essay "Tense Present," David Foster Wallace claims that Bryan Garner's *A Dictionary of Modern American Usage* is effective because Garner effaces his individuality from the argument: upon finishing *ADMAU*, the reader has no idea whether Garner is "black or white, gay or straight, Democrat or Dittohead" (57). To Wallace, Garner's ethical appeal derives from the fact that he does not seem to exist at all, and he doesn't let his personality get in the way of his argument. But while Wallace claims that Garner is a "genius" (57), he deliberately departs from Garner's anonymous writing style. In fact, Wallace flaunts his authorial voice, and by the end of the essay the reader is well acquainted with the author. This begs the question: if Wallace so admires Garner's impersonal approach, why does he appeal to his reader with such different rhetoric?

Indeed, David Foster Wallace shares an awful lot about his past and present life. From the author's endless digressions, we know that Wallace is a SNOOT, his family's nickname for a usage fanatic "whose idea of Sunday fun is to look for mistakes in Safire's column's prose itself" (41). We know that Wallace, like his mother, is an English teacher. We know that Wallace is the product of a "nuclear family," his mother being "a SNOOT of the most rabid and intractable sort" and his father being the sort of guy who just "rolled his eyes and drove" while his neurotic family members hollered SNOOT-y songs from the back seat (41). We know that Wallace was the kind of kid who actually wrote these songs, and the kind of kid who actually knew what the word "solecism" means.

In fact, David Foster Wallace seems to *go out of his way* to share snippets of his Grammar Geek past. This show-and-tell attitude is in complete opposition to Garner's more anonymous strategy, which can lead the reader to believe that if Garner is a genius, then Wallace must be a nincompoop for projecting himself onto his argument.

But David Foster Wallace does not always write as David Foster Wallace, the Rural Midwestern and SNOOT-y English professor, might be expected to write. He makes liberal use of unconventional words, acronyms, and abbreviations as well as the irregular capitalization of nouns ("SNOOT," "*ADMAU*," and "Computer Nerd," just to name a few) (41). Lexicographic jargon, such as "1-P pronoun," and extensive footnotes imitate academic prose, and yet within those very same footnotes Wallace has no reservation in bandying about words like "wacko" (51) and "total idiot" (53). Childish speech (such as the "plus" in "*plus* also the 'uncomfortable' part" and the "sort of" in "it was *sort of* our family's version of '100 Bottles . . . Wall'") sits alongside obscure foreign imports such as *à clef* and *Sprachgefühl* (41). In fact, David Foster

Wallace's essay uses as many different writing styles as there are dialects of Standard English.

Wallace's prose has far more character than Garner's. Indeed, "Tense Present" is appealing precisely because the author's voice is so pronounced. Thus, what at first appears to be a raving review of Garner's dictionary becomes an ironic criticism of Garner's bland but perfect Standard English. Real people don't speak Garner's Standard English; real people *must* be either "black or white, gay or straight, Democrat or Dittohead" (57), and these character traits define how they speak, write, and interact with others. Even though Wallace seems to be defending the existence of Standard English, the vivacity of his prose undercuts his argument. Wallace's English is *not* Standard: it is unique among the myriad other dialects spoken around the globe. Thus, he is arguing *for* diversity in the English language, not against it.

The examples given above prove that Wallace's writing style is not limited to a single, Standard English voice. The reader hears not only the author's SNOOT-y English but also Rural Midwestern English, Academic English, Political English, Colloquial English, Simple English, and a never-ending laundry list of variations, permutations, and combinations thereof. Wallace argues that English is a diverse, living language, and its speakers are not limited to educated WASPs, and its written usage is not limited to lexicographic dissertations. English (unlike, for example, Latin, which was deployed as an upper-class trait) is truly democratic because it is used every day in countless contexts by people from all walks of life.

Wallace does not directly broach the issue of the diversity of English in his essay. In this way, Wallace is like Garner in that "his argumentative strategy is totally brilliant and totally sneaky, and part of both qualities is that it usually doesn't seem like there's even an argument going on at all" (57). David Foster Wallace lets his words speak for themselves. Even in an essay praising the merits of Standard English, he manages to display the versatility and flexibility of the English language without uttering a word on the subject. His specifically non-Standard choice of words proves that other forms of English can be just as persuasive as Standard English.

Even more brilliant and sneaky is that this undercover rhetoric only reinforces Wallace's ostensible argument. The fact that individual words define (and support) Wallace's position vis-à-vis the English language is undeniable proof in favor of Wallace's fundamental thesis: that words *do* have power, that language *does* matter, and that English usage is in fact a political issue. If words have the power to convince, then they also have the power to manipulate, to sway, to incite into action. Anything this powerful is by definition a social concern, and so what does or does not go into the dictionary is an issue of the utmost social, political, and democratic importance.

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BIRD'S WORDS: JAZZ LANGUAGE AND IMITATION

ELI ALEINIKOFF

In March of 2009, at Smalls Jazz Club in New York City, I heard, "live," the sound of a saxophonist who died in 1955. I watched Luigi Grasso, a twenty-three-year-old saxophone player from Italy, play Charlie "Bird" Parker's tunes and improvisational lines with Parker's tone and phrasing, brandishing even the same model horn and mouthpiece that Parker often played. As a huge Bird fan, I found the performance exhilarating, if slightly unsettling. I wasn't just watching art based on other art; I was watching a live imitation—an artist whose sole purpose was to recall the work of another artist.

I hesitate, however, to place jazz performers like Grasso in the same camp as Elvis impersonators or "copy-paste" plagiarizers. His playing was enjoyable even for those unfamiliar with Parker's music, and there was, to be sure, nothing Grasso sought to conceal: his references to Bird were explicit, obvious to anyone even vaguely familiar with Parker's sound or compositions. What was it, then, about Grasso's performance that made me feel uneasy? There is, I believe, a tendency to consider such blatant imitation a kind of theft, an offense against the originator and the art form. We may also be inclined to judge the performance a disservice to the imitator, who must reject his own "voice" to recreate another's.

But Grasso is not just an imitator. He is a *jazz* imitator. And jazz seems in many ways to allow for and perhaps even encourage imitation, both as a part of the effort to preserve stylistic trends from earlier eras and to the extent that imitation aids in the development of a musician's personal, creative voice. A jazz musician finds his own voice as an improviser through, rather than against, tradition. Jazz improvisation is not just a product of arbitrary melodic and rhythmic choices, nor does it depend on a spur-of-the-moment exploration of whatever happens to come to mind. It is, rather, a structured medium of communication between musicians with a common understanding of harmony and a familiarity with typical melodic gestures. Improvisers rely heavily on the "jazz tradition," which acts as a common source of material for any performer within the idiom. Esteemed saxophonist Branford Marsalis explains that improvisation is "not really about making up your own ideas any more than speaking English is about making up new words" (Marsalis). The "jazz as a language" metaphor has, as of late, become a popular trope in jazz pedagogy. It accurately describes improvisation as a method of communication that necessarily relies on a shared set of musical ideas—a jazz vocabulary. Students of jazz develop a vocabulary by memorizing the work of their predecessors, whose improvised solos act as repositories of "words" and "phrases.

But could this kind of study actually be considered a form of plagiarism, much like a writer lifting another's words? Jonathan Lethem, in his essay "The Ecstasy of Influence," addresses the creative process and plagiarism, using, appropriately, sentences and ideas lifted from the works of others. He proposes the idea of a "commons" as a way to understand the communal nature of creative achievement (66). Language, for Lethem, is the best example of a commons as it is shared between people, "possessed by no one, not even by society as a whole" (66). If we accept, along with Marsalis, the jazz-language comparison, then Lethem's analysis certainly applies. Lethem notes that art and culture are like "the commons of *language:* altered by every contributor, expanded by even the most passive user" and that even imitation exemplifies "passive use" (66). Rather than interacting with the source through deconstruction, or by reimagining it in a modern context, the imitator seeks only accurate re-creation. In Lethem's view, such an act is not an offense against the art form but rather an exercise that serves the art form, that allows it to expand and change. The passive user acts as a kind of promoter, exposing the original to a wider audience than was initially garnered. Lethem cites an extreme case in which Edmund Spenser's "Prothalamion" became "known largely because of [T.S] Eliot's use of it" in his "The Waste Land" (61).

Although Parker's popularity is not dependent on contemporary imitation, live re-creations do expose his music to a wider audience. Perhaps more importantly, modern imitations of Parker are, by their very nature, forms of interpretation. No one sounds exactly like Bird. The passive user, through imitation, faces the impossible task of separating his production from his identity, the challenge of re-creating what he could never have created. The work of an imitator thus inevitably departs from its source of influence. The passive user, perhaps as a mark of his failure, becomes an interpreter, an *active* user—a contributor rather than a taker.

In her essay *Copy Wrong: Plagiarism, Process, Property, and the Law*, Laurie Stearns, like Lethem, cites the inadequacy of current copyright law, which, by their accounts, fails to acknowledge the interdependence of creative achievements. Instead of a commons, Stearns proposes a "creative contract," a social *agreement* between creator and audience member (540). Stearns imagines such a contract existing alongside copyright law. "Infractions . . . such as plagiarism" are therefore breaches of the creative contract and "infringements of property rights" (540). She does not attempt to outline a legal environment that is any less hostile to artistic imitation. Rather, Stearns seeks to shift some of the challenge of defining and enforcing restrictions from the judicial system to a social web of creators and users.

Although Lethem describes his commons as "controlled by common consent," he does not regard the commons as a violable contract (66). He believes that the commons is "constructed as a mutual gift by those who compose it" (66). The consent is therefore inherent to the creation itself; the product is a "gift," open to any use, corrupted only by "belief in private ownership" (67). The distinction between art as a

gift and art as an agreement is perhaps the defining point of divergence. The "contract metaphor" (Stearns 540), for Stearns, broadens the narrow legal "conception of harm" (533). It expands the established legal agreement, regarding imitation as a violation that affects the "original work," legitimate "contributions," "all writers and scholars," even "the public as a whole" (534). Lethem's commons, however, seem to allow some room for imitation. If the art is indeed a gift, belonging to "everyone and no one," part of an inclusive public commons, its imitations and variants become a part of the structure rather than a violation of it (66).

Stearns and Lethem refer to art and culture in the abstract, drafting proposals fit to encompass all art forms and all artists. The unnamed author of the law review note "Jazz Has Got Copyright and That Ain't Good," however, focuses on jazz specifically and argues that copyright law, in its uniform approach to the issue of plagiarism, seems mostly inadequate for the task ("Jazz" 1942). The law oversimplifies what is a complex relationship in jazz between source and influence, language and speaker. The author highlights the distinct position of contemporary jazz, which is currently struggling to remain commercially viable and creatively intact ("Jazz" 1940). He cites Geoff Dyer, who wrote that jazz, unlike other musical forms, "has remained uniquely in touch with the animating forces of its origins" (qtd. in "Jazz" 1942). A static art form consisting solely of uninspired imitators—music that remains in touch with its "animating forces" and little else—would certainly struggle to remain contemporary, relevant and popular. Yet jazz is a diverse art form; its artists accept influences from a wide array of styles, many of them outside of the genre altogether. In such variety there remains space for the traditionalist who seeks only to recreate the music of his predecessors. The author points out that in 2002 the average age of those attending jazz events was forty-three ("Jazz" 1940). Of course, this fact underscores the need for jazz performers that can appeal to younger audiences, but a complete transformation would risk losing the support of the current base that traditional jazz serves to sustain. Jazz in its current struggle for public and creative relevancy demands both innovators and imitators—those who wish to reform the music, those who wish to preserve it, and, of course, the many artists who fall somewhere in between.

The music's reliance on tradition can be extended, analytically, to define the artist's creative development, which like the art form itself must draw heavily from tradition. Stearns defends imitation as "an inevitable component of creation," yet stops short of noting its significance to the creative development of the imitator (513). Lethem, too, focuses on the specific products of creation. He defends "second use" in reference to the art form, and not in relation to the artist (64). But perhaps the most defensible form of imitation is that which benefits the imitator over a sustained period of development. Jazz in particular requires imitative study, which helps musicians learn the intricate language and vast tradition of which their music is a part. The jazz artist cannot innovate without first learning to imitate. Indeed, Grasso's Parker obsession can become a positive foundation of influence, an entry point into his study of bebop

language and jazz repertoire. The emphasis here is no longer on the development of a given creation; instead, the focus is on the individual development of the *creator*.

Even with this analysis in mind, I view Grasso's performance with a degree of ambivalence. Charlie Parker's own words effectively summarize my discomfort. "Music," Parker once observed, "is your own experience, your own thoughts, your wisdom. If you don't live it, it won't come out your horn" (qtd. in "About Memorial"). Improvisation, in particular, is a highly personal means of expression. Grasso's playing, though remarkably fluid and advanced, seemed at times unnatural, forced, bordering on disingenuous—a musical sort of self-denial. Parker's style was a reflection of where he came from and who he was, a product of his time; his personal musical vocabulary will never accurately express Grasso's ideas. Grasso's work contains an implicit contradiction in that he remains personally detached from what he intends as a medium of personal expression. And there is a certain irony in paying homage to Bird, a musician notable for the ways in which he broke from tradition, through mimicry. Grasso, by reproducing the music of Charlie Parker, adopts an approach that betrays much of what Parker's music represents.

Imitation in jazz plays a fundamental role in the creative development of an artist, and it remains integral to the effort to preserve a rich tradition of music. Lethem's description of the commons outlines a creative environment in which imitation is permissible, even valuable. I, too, see promise in the imitators and value in their imitations. Grasso, by immersing himself in Parker's music, has acquired a technical facility that is nothing short of breathtaking. As a virtuoso, he is uniquely equipped to develop a singular mastery of the music. Grasso's job, now, is to move beyond his superficial rendering of Parker's language and embrace, in its stead, Parker's audacious spirit.

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PLAGIARISM AS REVOLUTION, CONCEPT AS CONTENT: APOTHEOSIZING THE AUTHOR UNDER THE AEGIS OF APPROPRIATION

DAVID FROOMKIN

"Art is either plagiarism or revolution."
—attributed to Paul Gauguin

In "It's Not Plagiarism. In the Digital Age, It's 'Repurposing.,'" Professor Kenneth Goldsmith writes about his course "Uncreative Writing," which explores the concept of authorship. His students study the Internet's impact on the proliferation of plagiarism. Goldsmith observes that "the sheer penetration and saturation of broadband . . . makes the harvesting of masses of language easy and tempting," going on to discuss new artistic methods facilitated by the Internet that rely on appropriating previous artistic works ("It's Not Plagiarism").

In his course, Goldsmith encourages—and even requires—his students to plagiarize. Worried about the conventional and clichéd way in which creative writing is often taught, with students told that their job as authors is to produce works of originality, Goldsmith established his course as an alternative:

> We retype documents and transcribe audio clips. We make small changes to Wikipedia pages (changing an "a" to "an" or inserting an extra space between words). We hold classes in chat rooms, and entire semesters are spent exclusively in Second Life. Each semester, for their final paper, I have them purchase a term paper from an online paper mill and sign their name to it . . . Students then must get up and present the paper to the class as if they wrote it themselves, defending it from attacks by the other students. What paper did they choose? Is it possible to defend something you didn't write? Something, perhaps, you don't agree with? Convince us. ("It's Not Plagiarism")

By making his students express themselves in words not of their own choosing, Goldsmith forces them to confront what constitutes authorial intent. Though they copy, they engage in the significant job of arranging. Even in choosing which paper to plagiarize, his students necessarily express themselves. Moreover, as they are appropriating others' ideas, the aesthetic value of their products must derive entirely from the method of composition. "Uncreative Writing" proposes a radical redefinition of authorship for the digital age, which would make context the new content. Indeed, it suggests that even if it is impossible to create substantively original works, art may still derive its aesthetic value from its conceptual basis.

To justify his project, Goldsmith invokes the example of novelist Jonathan Lethem, whose February 2007 article in *Harper's Magazine*, "The Ecstasy of Influence: A plagiarism," epitomizes the kind of patch-written project Goldsmith extols. There is not a single new idea in Lethem's essay; instead, it synthesizes the ideas of a great number of authors—and indeed does so without obvious attribution. As Lethem's title points out, his entire essay is a plagiarism. Goldsmith writes,

> In academia, patchwriting is considered an offense equal to that of plagiarism. If Lethem had submitted this as a senior thesis or dissertation chapter, he'd be shown the door. Yet few would argue that he didn't construct a brilliant work of art—as well as writing a pointed essay—entirely in the words of others. It's the way in which he conceptualized and executed his writing machine—surgically choosing what to borrow, arranging those words in a skillful way—that wins us over. Lethem's piece is a self-reflexive, demonstrative work of unoriginal genius. ("It's Not Plagiarism")

That Lethem's finished product succeeds stylistically is unquestionable. Despite his almost complete reliance on appropriation, Lethem manages paradoxically to create a brilliant work of art by synthesizing his influences so beautifully. As Goldsmith points out, it is the conceptually elegant method by which Lethem crafts his essay that gives it its appeal.

Goldsmith characterizes copyright criticism as the centerpiece of Lethem's argument. "Echoing the cries of free-culture advocates such as Lawrence Lessig and Cory Doctorow, [Lethem] eloquently rails against copyright law as a threat to the lifeblood of creativity," he writes ("It's Not Plagiarism"). Yet, Lethem does much more than simply criticize copyright. Lethem's observation that all works of art embody their antecedents leads him to argue that copying is not only inevitable, but desirable. Many masterpieces owe their creation to artists' inspiration by predecessors. Thus, Lethem questions the traditional conception of authorship, which rests on the assumption that creators produce works of unique inspiration (63).

This assumption underpins Jane Ginsburg's 2009 article "The Author's Place in the Future of Copyright," in which Ginsburg, a Columbia law professor, defends the traditional view of authorship. In stark opposition to Lethem's critique, she views copyright as vital in protecting this tradition. "Vesting copyright in authors," she writes, "made authorship the functional and moral center of the system" (148). Ginsburg believes that authorship is the basis of a social system of value. Lethem's argument for copying, she suggests, is an affront to authorship. To allow anyone to plagiarize an author's work would be to reduce its value and thus be an attack on the author. Ginsburg worries that "the advent of new technologies of creation and dissemination of works of authorship not only challenges traditional revenue models, but also calls into question whatever artistic control the author may retain over her

work" (148–9). The prospect of authors losing their creative control scares her, because she equates authorship with originality and fears the demise of originality.

Ginsburg criticizes advocates of a free culture who claim that copyright "somehow degrades the noble calling of disinterested creativity" (152), labeling them "techno-postmodernists." She writes: "If the author is dead, or must be dethroned, then the reader not only lives, but reigns supreme. Readers give meaning to the texts they peruse; reading itself becomes a creative act" (151). The postmodern theory supposes that readers rather than authors give meaning to texts today in the act of reading them. This would undermine the traditional concept of authorship by devaluing the role of the author. Ginsburg views techno-postmodernism as nihilistic because it challenges her value system. Ginsburg argues that "the Internet gives concrete effect to the postmodernist theory of reader as creator, for all readers can remanipulate the text, and none can impose unilateral significance" (151). As Goldsmith points out in his article, the Internet makes appropriation easy, which Ginsburg would argue facilitates the dethroning of the author.

It would be easy to label Goldsmith a techno-postmodernist and to interpret his course as an attack on authorship, yet the opposite is true. By reimagining what the author can be in the 21st century, Goldsmith defends authorship against those who would devalue it. Ginsburg might see the goal of the course as manipulating text to expose a lack of "unilateral significance," fitting with her thesis about readers' replacement of the author (Ginsburg 151). However, Goldsmith's course is concerned not with the role of the reader, but of the writer. It is not a course in techno-postmodernism. The "new writing has an electronic gleam in its eye," but "its results are distinctly analog, taking inspiration from radical modernist ideas and juicing them with 21st-century technology" ("It's Not Plagiarism"). Indeed, Goldsmith rightly rejects the nihilistic notion that authorship is dead. He agrees with Ginsburg that this is a theory under which "individual creativity is discredited" (Ginsburg 152). Rather, Goldsmith argues that the new literature is "a writing imbued with celebration, ablaze with enthusiasm for the future, embracing this moment as one pregnant with possibility" ("It's Not Plagiarism"). Ginsburg's account of the techno-postmodernists does not reflect Goldsmith's argument: he suggests that by copying, writers can create works of aesthetic value—and that this is perhaps the only source of creativity left to artists today. Goldsmith is trying not to dethrone, but to inaugurate, the author.

Lethem represents better the idea behind Goldsmith's course; indeed, his theory defends postmodernism from charges of nihilism, reinterpreting what postmodernism means in the context of authorship. Lethem examines T.S. Eliot's preoccupation with attribution, implying that it reflects a broader social paradigm. Lethem argues that this obsession with citation "can be read as a symptom of modernism's contamination anxiety. Taken from this angle, what exactly is postmodernism, except modernism without the anxiety?" he asks (62). Lethem suggests there is nothing nihilistic about this postmodern approach to creation. Rather, he reconciles postmodernism with a

concept of authorship, suggesting that authors may still create original works of art using techniques of appropriation. Copying, Lethem says, allows authors to "make the world larger" (65). This strongly implies that he has not abandoned the possibility of creating works of originality.

In light of Lethem's claim that appropriation reinforces authorship, it is possible to consider Goldsmith's course a reaction to the supposed nihilistic reductionism of Ginsburg's techno-postmodernists. Goldsmith's seeming willingness to concede the death of originality proves chimeric, as he ultimately suggests that copying allows his students to produce work of incredible creativity. Goldsmith observes that his students will at first invariably react with horror to his instruction that they copy. Yet, ultimately, they reconsider their objections. Goldsmith describes how "after a semester of my forcibly suppressing a student's 'creativity' by making her plagiarize and transcribe, she will tell me how disappointed she was," not because her creativity had been stifled, but "because, in fact, what we had accomplished was not uncreative at all; by not being 'creative,' she had produced the most creative body of work in her life" ("It's Not Plagiarism"). Goldsmith's seeming dismissal of authorship is an attempt to reclaim it in an age in which, to many, it seems impossible to create a substantively original work.

Indeed, Goldsmith's article can be interpreted as an articulation of a fundamental principle of authorship: that creation is as much about methodology as about material—and, moreover, that through plagiarism his students elevate method to material. For Goldsmith, the "trend among younger writers who take [Lethem's] exercise one step further by boldly appropriating the work of others without citation, disposing of the artful and seamless integration of Lethem's patchwriting," reveals that "context is the new content" (Goldsmith 3). Modern technology has created an aesthetic sensibility that considers appropriation an essential aspect of authorship. What matters is no longer what one says, but the mode of her saying it. Still to Goldsmith, the postmodern writer gains authorship by creating a work of aesthetic merit. Thus, in a world in which "long-cherished notions of creativity are under attack, eroded by file-sharing, media culture, widespread sampling, and digital replication," Goldsmith's course "rise[s] to that challenge by employing strategies of appropriation, replication, plagiarism, piracy, sampling, plundering, as compositional methods" ("Uncreative Writing" 1). "Along the way," he writes in his syllabus, "we'll trace the rich history of forgery, frauds, hoaxes, avatars, and impersonations spanning the arts, with a particular emphasis on how they employ language" (1). Goldsmith's course thus focuses on employing language to express old ideas in new ways, which he believes permits new authorship.

Yet there is an ambiguity at the heart of Goldsmith's idea. Writing of the beauty of plagiarists' products, Goldsmith concludes that "far from being coercive or persuasive, this writing delivers emotion obliquely and unpredictably, with sentiments expressed as a result of the writing process rather than by authorial intention" ("It's Not

Plagiarism"). Goldsmith seems to distinguish between compositional method and creation, the latter alone associated with traditional views of authorship.

In this, he channels postmodernist French philosopher Michel Foucault, who argues that authorship is a modern concept, sure to wither away. Foucault claims in his 1969 essay "What Is an Author?" that "the author does not precede the works; he is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction" (Foucault 119). Thus, he argues authorship is a characteristic of, rather than requisite for, a work. Authorship matters to Foucault only because it affects the perception of a work. Foucault anticipates presciently the controversy over the disappearance of authorship. Moreover, he argues that "the author function will disappear . . . in such a manner that fiction and its polysemous texts will once again function according to another mode, but still with a system of constraint—one which will no longer be the author, but which will have to be determined or, perhaps, experienced" (119). Foucault expresses the postmodern theory that claims that authorship will be replaced by a different lens through which to interpret text.

Foucault does not address Ginsburg's concern, shared by Lethem and Goldsmith, about the demise of originality, but another idea from the same essay may better reflect the postmodern development in authorship. Foucault advances the concept of "discursivity," a specific—and heightened—form of authorship in which creators establish not only an idea but an avenue for ensuing ideas. "Founders of discursivity," Foucault writes, "are unique in that they are not just the authors of their own works. They have produced something else: the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts" (Foucault 114). He gives as his examples Freud and Marx, who pioneered fields of thought. Perhaps the new aesthetic sensibility of the digital age extends the realm of Foucauldian discursivity to include all works that are plagiarized by the "techno-postmodernists." These works spawn methodological progeny in a parallel fashion to Marx's and Freud's inspiring their heirs. If Goldsmith's methods of appropriation can indeed be considered an extension of the realm of discursivity, then the very plagiarism that Ginsburg decries as defacing an original work instead uplifts it, giving the original creator's authorship a discursive character. Viewed this way, Goldsmith's process could heighten authorship itself.

Lethem provides perhaps the best extension of Foucault's theory of authorship. Asking whether "our appetite for creative vitality require[s] the violence and exasperation of another avant-garde, with its wearisome killing-the-father imperatives," Lethem suggests "we [might] be better off ratifying the ecstasy of influence—and deepening our willingness to understand the commonality and timelessness of the methods and motifs available to artists" (67). Lethem proposes to end discussions of modernism and postmodernism, and instead to embrace methods of reuse as a definitive aspect of authorship. To do so would be to embrace the

collaborative character of authorship in contemporary times. This is exactly what Goldsmith does in "Uncreative Writing."

By employing plagiarism, Goldsmith revolutionizes the concept of authorship, which he says derives not only from the substance of a work but also from its very composition. Like Ginsburg, he maintains that authorship still lives, but he differs from her in his rejection of the limited view of authorship which she defends. Instead, sharing Lethem's view that plagiarism allows contemporary artists to create works of originality, Goldsmith expands authorship twice: once by recognizing the significance of appropriation and again by extending Foucault's discursivity.

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TERMINATING TENURE: INSTRUCTION, INQUIRY, AND THE INSTITUTIONALIZED INTELLEGENTSIA

DAVID FROOMKIN

The power of professors within the university has diminished dramatically in recent years as administrators have asserted dominance over university governance. Another, more disturbing trend developed simultaneously: the rising role of contingent faculty. Universities increasingly hire adjuncts to teach classes, leaving a diminished and marginalized faculty to conduct research. Right-wing demonization of tenure and the academy only encourages this trend, as it undermines the public role of the professoriate. Occasional examples of professorial negligence do not reflect broad trends in academia, and the alternatives to tenure remain less desirable. Tenure remains the most plausible way of protecting academic freedom. This paper will examine recent attacks on the professoriate and the impact of the corporatization of the university, arguing that tenure serves a vital social role in protecting intellectual inquiry and that the decline of tenure harms the academic mission of the university.

Criticisms of tenure should be considered in light of the purpose of the professoriate proffered by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). In its 1940 "Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure," the AAUP staked out important claims about the purpose and merits of tenure:

> Tenure is a means to certain ends; specifically: (1) freedom of teaching and research and of extramural activities and (2) a sufficient degree of economic security to make the profession attractive to men and women of ability. Freedom and economic security, hence, tenure, are indispensable to the success of an institution in fulfilling its obligations to its students and to society. (AAUP)

An examination of the efficacy of tenure must consider whether it meets these goals.

In a May 2011 article in the *Weekly Standard* entitled "Fat City," retired University of Illinois Professor David Rubinstein attempts to rebut precisely these claims. Highly disparaging of professors, Rubinstein rails against what he sees as a perverse benefits system that provides disincentives to work. He places tenure at the center of this system. "The grandest prize of all is, of course, tenure," he writes. "The tenured live in a different world than ordinary mortals, a world in which fears of unemployment are banished, futures can be confidently planned, and retirement is secure" (Rubinstein). Rubinstein decries tenure for allowing lazy professors to do little work, while receiving a great deal of compensation for it.

The publication of Rubinstein's article inspired a brief frenzy in the blogosphere: right-wing pundits seized on Rubinstein's piece, while academics and progressives decried it. Conservative critics of the academy, like Charlotte Allen, a *National Review* columnist, saw Rubinstein's story as evidence for the stereotype of the lazy professor. Allen wrote gleefully that "[t]he article was a hoot and a half," lauding Rubinstein for revealing the truth about tenure (C. Allen). Progressive commentators, by contrast, found nothing funny in the article. Academic bloggers such as Andrew Gelman and Brad DeLong and progressive bloggers such as Matthew Yglesias criticized the article for misrepresenting the academy and presenting a flawed, one-sided view of tenure.

Rubinstein levels three key arguments against tenure: that it allows professors to neglect teaching and research, that it causes universities to overpay professors who contribute little to society, and that it fails to support academic freedom. He justifies each of these claims on the basis of firsthand experience. Supporting his first claim, he writes, "Before retiring, I carried a teaching load of two courses per semester: six hours of lecture a week. I usually scheduled classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays: The rest of the week was mine. Colleagues who pursued grants taught less, some rarely seeing a classroom" (Rubinstein). Examining the amount of time he spent working outside of class, Rubinstein claims that because he could reuse notes from year to year he spent little more than 20 minutes preparing for class.

In an article in the *New York Review of Books*, "Colleges: An Endangered Species?" Columbia Professor of American Studies Andrew Delbanco discusses the impact of tenure on teaching, concurring with Rubinstein's assessment that it threatens the quality of undergraduate teaching. Delbanco examines the historical context of tenure, writing that in the early twentieth century, "[f]aculty began to benefit from competitive recruitments in what was becoming a national system of linked campuses; and when some rival university came wooing, the first thing to bargain for was, of course, a reduced teaching load" (Delbanco). Delbanco associates competition for top professors with reduction of teaching responsibilities. Professors want to conduct research rather than to teach undergraduates, he suggests. Thus, he claims that competition for tenured professors detracts from the teaching mission of the academy by allowing top professors to ignore teaching in favor of research.

Questioning the relevance and importance of the work that professors produce, Rubinstein criticizes tenure for causing universities to pay professors large sums for doing little to benefit society. "My main task as a university professor was self-cultivation," he writes (Rubinstein). Rubinstein argues that professors with "esoteric academic interests" (Rubinstein studied the social theory of Marx and Wittgenstein) contribute little to society, observing that "the readership of academic journals is tiny . . . and most of this work had no impact beyond a small circle of interested academics" (Rubinstein). Yet these professors receive exorbitant compensation because they have tenure, he suggests. Rubinstein argues that professors fail to connect their highly

technical and specialized research to the academic needs of students and that this contributes to professors' neglect of their teaching responsibilities.

Finally, Rubinstein argues that tenure stifles academic freedom by creating a culture of intellectual homogeneity. Rubinstein, a conservative, worries that faculties are dominated by left-wing ideologues and do not accept members who disagree with them. He attacks his discipline, sociology, and the university itself for an alleged culture of political one-sidedness and even extremism. Tenured professors are overwhelmingly Democrats, he claims, while his own discipline is dominated by Marxists. He cites a study by Harvard Professor Neil Gross that finds that 87.6 percent of social scientists voted for Kerry, while only 6.2 percent voted for Bush in the 2004 Presidential election (Rubinstein). Rubinstein adds that "Gross also found that 25 percent of sociologists characterize themselves as Marxists, likely a higher percentage than members of the Chinese Communist party." Rubinstein worries that this climate of increasingly homogenous orthodoxy does not allow the academy to fulfill its mission of providing academic freedom.

Jonathan Cole, a Columbia professor, agrees that this presents a problem. "Tenure does provide limited protection from formal sanctions for scholars taking on generally ideologically prohibited subjects. But it does not secure those same scholars from contempt from their colleagues," he writes (Cole 497). Although Cole is no conservative, he agrees tentatively with Rubinstein that the current state of tenure does pose some obstacles to complete academic freedom. While Cole thinks that additional measures might help protect academic freedom, he still maintains that the framework of tenure is broadly favorable to academic freedom (Cole 64).

Rubinstein is most obviously mistaken in his first claim. Rubinstein's former colleagues were quick to take him to task for his claim that tenured professors generally neglect their teaching and research responsibilities. Fellow University of Illinois sociologists Barbara Risman, William Bridges, and Anthony Orum write,

> The reason that talented people are eager to enter the teaching profession is because they are passionate about doing new research and imparting their knowledge to young men and women, not because they expect to lead a life of leisure and affluence. Faculty members are hired only after they have accumulated evidence of their research expertise and their teaching excellence . . . After that, they serve six-year apprenticeships as assistant professors, with absolutely no assurance they will be accepted into the ranks of senior faculty. Some burn out, as Rubinstein obviously did. But most care passionately both about their research and their students. Most work far more than a 40-hour week, taking home student papers and research projects over the weekend, during school closures, and more recently, during mandated furlough periods. (qtd. in Halper)

Substantial evidence supports this view of the professoriate. An article by the AAUP confirms that "[r]ecent studies of faculty workload show average faculty workweeks at four-year institutions ranging from 52-57 hours" ("The Work of Faculty" 36). The report also notes that even at public universities professors dedicate on average 29 percent of their time to research and 43 percent to teaching (37). Another study found similar results, reporting that "tenure-track faculty generate a much larger proportion of undergraduate teaching activity than might be expected" (Middaugh 1). While, as Delbanco argues, universities pay professors primarily to conduct research, Gelman points out that most people who become teachers do so because they enjoy teaching ("Looking For a Purpose"). Tenured faculty devote substantial time to undergraduate teaching nationwide. The US Department of Education found that sixty-nine percent of tenured faculty and seventy-one percent of tenure-track faculty teach undergraduate courses in a given semester (Chen 106), compared to seventy-seven percent of "instructional faculty and staff" (103). Though, as Delbanco suggests, many famous professors could easily negotiate contracts that would exempt them from teaching undergraduates entirely, the regularity with which many tenured professors teach undergraduate courses suggests that they enjoy doing so.

Moreover, tenured professors are more effective teachers because of their relevant research expertise. Despite Delbanco's claim that undergraduate teaching has become distanced from research, students have a lot to gain from interactions with tenured professors. Cary Nelson, English professor and president of the AAUP, concurs with this point, writing that "[t]enured faculty members also have a reason to feel strong institutional loyalty and to devote themselves wholeheartedly to their students. The decline of tenure goes hand-in-hand with a decline in the quality of education. Poor teaching conditions produce poor learning conditions" ("Why College Students"). Studies have found that research in relevant areas improves professors' teaching (Colbeck 647), particularly in the humanities (Smeby 5). Thus, Cole observes that "[e]xcellence in teaching and excellence in research are compatible and mutually reinforcing" (112). "The best researchers are also among the most brilliant lecturers or mentors of students. These are the producers of fresh ideas who are truly at the cutting edge of their disciplines and who can give their students a sense of excitement about scholarship at the research frontier," he writes (112). Additionally, while junior faculty suffer from a "publish or perish" mentality that forces them to focus on their research (Donoghue 38), tenured faculty have the leisure to focus on teaching. This, along with their greater experience, may help explain the better teaching of senior faculty.

Ironically, even Rubinstein admits he did not neglect his research. He points out, "The last professional paper I published—after my promotion—was accepted by the leading journal in my field." And he notes that "a (small) literature has clustered around some of my work" (qtd. in Halper). Gelman confirms this, noting that "Google Scholar shows some citations" and concluding that "Rubinstein was a moderately productive scholar at a middling-rank university—not a scholarly 'slacker'" ("Looking

for a purpose"). Defending himself against colleagues' criticisms, Rubinstein also points out he received awards for his research. This undermines Rubinstein's claim further. He admits that his "article was about what is possible in the system" (qtd. in Halper). Yet he provides no evidence that professors fail to conduct research, and evidence suggests rather the opposite (AAUP, "The Work" 39).

While Rubinstein argues that tenure results in professors being overpaid, Gelman refutes this claim. In a June 1, 2011 post on his blog, *Statistical Modeling, Causal Inference, and Social Science*, Gelman, a Columbia statistics professor, considers Rubinstein's article, examining the claim that tenure results in excessive salaries for professors. Gelman considers tenure a necessary incentive to induce professors to enter the profession, rather than the private sector. Indeed, Rubinstein admits that academics are underpaid in comparison to private sector employees. He claims, however, that "[t]he rarity of quits and the abundance of applications is good evidence that the life of the college professor is indeed enviable." Gelman responds by pointing out the competition among universities for top professors. "From an economic view, this makes sense," he writes. "If you want to get the best people, you need to compete" ("The 'Cushy Life'"). Gelman's claim seems reasonable: tenure is an incentive to attract good professors. Without tenure, universities would need to provide professors with other incentives, such as higher salaries.

Further, Rubinstein's colleagues provide an important defense of the role of academic research. "As Rubinstein admits, it takes painstaking research and revision to get published in academic journals," they write; and

> policy-makers, journalists, other teachers, NGOs, research departments in private businesses, and other interested parties rely on the journals, precisely because they are so rigorously vetted, to get the latest research and best practice findings. In turn they get the information out to wider audiences or use it in ways that benefit the public" (qtd. in Halper).

This analysis suggests that research has a valuable social function.

Rubinstein's final claim, that tenure hinders academic freedom, presents the most compelling challenge. Nelson addresses this issue in a recent article in the *Key Reporter*, writing, "A college must be a place where students and faculty can freely question the beliefs many other citizens take for granted. They must be able to criticize the campus administration and the state and national government without fear of reprisal" ("Why College Students"). He goes on to warn that "[t]he erosion of tenure means that thousands of [junior] faculty members are vulnerable to administrative, political, or religious pique and whim" ("Why College Students"). This is not an atmosphere conducive to the exercise of academic freedom. Nelson elaborates on this theme in his 2010 book, *No University Is an Island: Saving Academic Freedom*, arguing that if professors must fear reprisals for their criticisms, such criticisms will not be voiced.

"If they can fire you for what you say, you really do not have academic freedom, either in the classroom or in print," he writes (*No University Is an Island* 165–166).

There are simply no compelling alternatives to tenure. University of California, Berkeley philosopher John Searle proposes a dubious alternative in his book *The Campus War: A Sympathetic Look at the University in Agony*. "The way to protect the job of the professor from political interference," he writes, "is to place sovereignty over the university in the hands of the faculty" (230). If the faculty were given sovereignty, Searle suggests, it could replace tenure with a system of contracts, with professors receiving their first contract after a brief probationary period and colleagues reviewing them every seven years to ensure that they continued to focus on their teaching and research. Searle diagnoses correctly a major problem with the tenure process, which is indeed "intolerably long" (230). Further, this period functions unfortunately "as a kind of breaking-in period [because] after such a long time, the young professor is likely to be less of a threat to the old guard who run the department than if he were still young and full of fight" (Searle 231). Searle's proposed solution, shortening the probationary period, seems appropriate. However, abolishing tenure remains problematic. Even if academics were given control of the university, abolishing tenure would still prevent professors from exercising fully their academic freedom because it would put them at risk of retribution from their senior colleagues who would review their contracts. Still, Searle's alternative would work better than the alternative to which many universities are today resorting.

Universities increasingly rely on contingent faculty to teach classes. In part, this is because poorly paid adjunct professors provide a cheap source of labor. Yet universities may have ulterior motives. As the AAUP notes, "Though budget-driven, and not at first instance seen as political or intellectual assaults on academic freedom or tenure, such measures are intended to be intrusive" ("The Work of Faculty" 38). This suggests that states have decreased budgets for public universities in order to limit the influence of academics, perhaps with ulterior political motives. Christopher Newfield adopts this argument in his 2008 book, *Unmaking the Public University: The Forty-Year Assault on the Middle Class*, in which he argues that conservative operatives launched a crusade against the academy in order to limit the proliferation of intellectuals' work and to prevent social mobility for the middle class. "The Right's culture warriors did not openly attack the economic position of the middle class, but they did attack the university," he writes;

> In doing so, they created the conditions for repeated budget cuts to the core middle-class institution. More fundamentally, they discredited the cultural conditions of mass-middle-class development, downsized the influence of its leading institution, the university, and reduced the social and political impacts of knowledge workers overall (Newfield 11). On the basis of their criticisms of the

> academy, conservatives campaigned successfully to reduce expenditures on public universities, often resulting in de facto privatization (Newfield 193).

Rubinstein's attack on tenure—and the ensuing commotion among conservative pundits—appears a symptom of this phenomenon.

Henry Lee Allen proposes another explanation, writing that because "tenure implies freedom and professional autonomy from administrators, trustees, or legislators," the reason for the decline of tenure is clear: tenure obstructs administrative control (H.L. Allen 104). Indeed, in the last few decades, university administrators have dramatically curtailed the influence of faculties on university governance. Benjamin Ginsberg documents this phenomenon in his recent book *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why It Matters*, in which he argues that universities have become corporatized by administrators who care only about attracting clients and not at all about academic freedom (198). Administrators see faculties as nuisances and have tried to marginalize them by hiring disempowered contingent faculty with no job security (Nelson, *No University* 56). Adjuncts pose no threat to administrative power (Nelson, *No University* 57). Adjuncts are also less effective teachers, spending less time preparing for class and significantly less time interacting with students outside of class and challenging students significantly less than do tenure-track professors (Umbach 102). Nelson cites similar evidence, noting that the problem "is not with the [contingent] faculty themselves but rather with their terms and conditions of employment, which do not enable part-time faculty 'to involve themselves adequately in promoting student learning'" (*No University* 85).

The growth of administration has weakened the professoriate within the university, with harmful consequences for the academy's vitality. Nelson observes that "[t]he rise of a separate class of career administrators and the substantial increase in their sheer numbers has helped fuel the belief that faculty are not full partners in the educational enterprise but rather resources to be controlled and managed. As Marc Bousquet argues, the administrative class increasingly conceives of itself as higher education's true vanguard" (*No University* 56). Heightened administrative oversight challenges faculty governance, potentially threatening the future of tenure (Nelson, *No University* 56). In jeopardizing tenure, the rise of administrators also challenges the academic mission of the university. Ginsberg warns that "Controlled by administrators . . . the university can never be more than what Stanley Aronowitz has aptly termed a knowledge factory, offering more or less sophisticated forms of vocational training to meet the needs of other established institutions in the public and private sectors" (Ginsberg 3). Preserving the academy as a space outside of market relations, a protected domain in which academics can pursue the truth without fear of political or bureaucratic intervention, requires ensuring the vitality of a tenured professoriate.

The rise of contingent faculty has had disastrous repercussions for academic freedom. Because of their lack of job security, non-tenure track professors often

"practice elaborate self-censorship to avoid offending students, parents, or administrators" (Nelson, *No University* 166). Nelson draws attention to the failure of tenured faculty to defend their contingent colleagues. He observes that

> [f]aculty with secure jobs have nonetheless themselves also paid a price for the fundamental disempowerment of large segments of their colleagues. A fragmented tenured faculty has no deep experience of solidarity to draw on and little collective experience of asserting its rights" (Nelson, *No University* 166).

The disempowerment of faculty in turn contributes to the dominance of administrators in university governance, with deleterious ramifications for academic freedom: "The parameters of academic freedom are thus often set by senior administrators, rather than by faculty discussion and consensus. Administrative tolerance for progressive pedagogy, should external critiques of such pedagogy gain political power, will be nonexistent on many campuses" (Nelson, *No University* 166). The decline of faculty governance goes hand in hand with the decline of tenure, contributing to the loss of academic freedom and thereby compromising the university's academic mission.

Without tenure, universities would educate students less effectively and produce less research. Both students and society at large would suffer from the decrease in the production and dissemination of valuable knowledge and the reduction in critical perspectives on social issues. Even though some professors may abuse the current system of tenure, tenure remains essential because it protects professors from pressure to obscure the truth and allows them to do their work free from censorship. Tenure is and will remain central to the functioning of a free and socially valuable academy.

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AN EXAMINATION OF CHINESE VS. WESTERN PARENTING THROUGH *BATTLE HYMN OF THE TIGER MOM*

YERIN PAK

"I threatened her with no lunch, no dinner, no Christmas or Hanukkah presents, no birthday parties for two, three, four years. . . . I told her to stop being lazy, cowardly, self-indulgent, and pathetic," writes Amy Chua, a Yale Law School professor, describing the tactics she used to force her daughter Lulu to play "The Little White Donkey" on the piano (61). This is one example Chua chronicles of parenting her two daughters, Sophia and Lulu, in *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*. In her book, Chua uses the term "tiger mother" to describe a style of parenting most commonly exercised by Chinese parents (4). Chua addresses the differences between Chinese and Western parenting in the introduction, writing, "Despite our squeamishness about cultural stereotypes, there are tons of studies out there showing marked and quantifiable differences between Chinese and Westerners when it comes to parenting" (5). From this statement, Chua goes on to briefly illuminate these differences, such as Chinese parents spending "approximately ten times as long every day drilling academic activities with their children" in comparison to Western parents (5).

The book unleashed a heated response, with some readers even sending death threats against Chua (Dolak). Why did Chua's book elicit such backlash? On the one hand, *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother's* reliance on Chinese and Western stereotypes and Chua's writing style may well invite controversy of this magnitude, but so do the responses of her critics. Through an examination of *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* and the discourse that the book spurred, we can see how representations of both Chinese and Western mothers have been distorted and, in turn, how these misrepresentations sidetracked what could have been an important discussion about Chinese versus Western parenting.

The controversy first erupted in January 2011 when the *Wall Street Journal* published an excerpt of *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*, titled "Why Chinese Mothers are Superior." Chua, who has stated numerous times that her book is not a parenting manual, claimed that "the *Wall Street Journal's* article strung together the most controversial sections of her book and failed to highlight that the book is a memoir about a personal journey of motherhood" (Dolak). Ironically, Chua's criticism of the *Wall Street Journal* excerpt can be applied to her own book. Just as the *Wall Street Journal* article "strung together the most controversial sections of her book," Chua has strung together her most controversial parenting anecdotes in *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*.

We can better understand this parallel between the excerpt and the book by inspecting the letter in response that Chua's daughter Sophia wrote, which reads in

part, "No outsider can know what our family is really like. . . . They don't see us eating our hamburgers with fried rice. They don't know how much fun we have when the six of us—dogs included—squeeze into one bed and argue about what movies to download from Netflix" (Chua-Rubenfeld). Perhaps the reason why no outsider can get a glimpse into this charming vision of Chua's family is because Chua decides not to portray this vision in the book, even though one would expect moments of familial intimacy to be included in a "memoir about a personal journey of motherhood" (Dolak). To a certain extent, Chua's decision to include anecdotes like "The Birthday Card" (in which Chua rejects the birthday cards Sophia and Lulu made for her because they were made carelessly and tells her daughters "I deserve better than this. So I *reject* this.") over stories about family bonding almost makes sense (Chua 103). After all, Chua seems eager to point out how strict and demanding she is compared to her Western counterparts and these anecdotes arguably do the job. With her one-dimensional portrayal of Chinese parenting, Chua perpetuates "the media stereotypes of Asian-Americans that are already so prevalent in our society—quiet, obedient, good-at-math nerds that through their rigid discipline end up having deficient social skills" (Chi).

Not only does Chua describe her daughters and herself as walking Chinese stereotypes, she typecasts the Western mothers she discusses in her book. The author suggests that Chinese parents raise more successful kids because of their Chinese heritage while Western parents raise less successful kids because of their Western heritage. This idea is primarily illustrated through comparisons she draws between her family and their Western counterparts throughout the book, such as the juxtaposition of Sophia and her Western peers at the Neighborhood Music School. While Chua enforced a rigorous practice schedule of ninety minutes a day, seven days a week for Sophia, "Most of the other students at the school had liberal Western parents, who were weak-willed and indulgent when it came to practicing" and mentions a student named Aubrey, "who was required to practice one minute per day for every year of her age" (Chua 27–28). Eventually, and of course partly because of this intense practice schedule, Sophia ended up playing at Carnegie Hall as an eighth-grade student (140). Chua explicitly calls herself (and her ability to execute such a rigid practice schedule for her daughter) a "big cultural advantage" for Sophia (27). This quotation is crucial to our understanding of Chua's use of stereotypes, demonstrating that she is able to drive her daughters to success because she is Chinese and that following these "Chinese values" is more favorable to raising successful kids than being a Western mother following "Western values."

What is the difference between a "Chinese mother" and a "Western mother"? Chua addresses this question in an interview with *Time* magazine, saying,

> I think the biggest difference is that I've noticed Western parents seem much more concerned about their children's psyches, their self-esteem, whereas tough

> immigrant parents assume strength rather than fragility in their children and therefore behave completely differently. (Luscombe)

To further examine the ethnic distinctions that Chua makes, we must also consider her disclaimer regarding her usage of the terms "Chinese mother" versus "Western parents" in her book. Chua writes, "When I use the term 'Western parents,' of course I'm not referring to all Western parents—just as 'Chinese mother' doesn't refer to all Chinese mothers," adding that some Korean, Indian, Jamaican, Irish, and Ghanaian parents qualify as "Chinese mothers," as well (Chua 4). However, Chua's disclaimer is ineffective, because she does not readdress this clarification in the rest of her book, and instead, perpetuates stereotyped images of Chinese mothers and children versus Western parents and children. The effect of Chua's book is an oversimplification of "Chinese students" and "American students" (not to mention, of course, that students can be both): the former is obedient and good at rote tasks while the latter is lazy and undisciplined.

Unfortunately, the critics responding to *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* rely on the same stereotypes that Chua employs. We see this quite visibly in writer Ayelet Waldman's response to Chua's book in the *Wall Street Journal*, "In Defense of the Guilty, Ambivalent, Preoccupied Western Mom." In her article, Waldman employs the very stereotypes Chua uses in *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*, beginning with a list, as Chua does, that detail the activities Waldman's children are allowed to do: quit studying the piano and the violin, sleep over at their friends' house, surf the Internet, etc. (*Wall Street Journal*). Waldman makes it quite obvious that she has taken Chua's list of forbidden activities for her children and has reversed it to make it a list of permitted activities. That is, Waldman seems to exaggerate the lax attitudes of certain Western parents just as Chua played up the harsh practices of the Chinese tiger mother. For instance, she writes that she always permits her children to "sleep over at their friends' houses, especially on New Year's Eve or our anniversary, thus saving us the cost of a babysitter" and to "participate in any extracurricular activity they wanted, so long as I was never required to drive farther than 10 minutes to get them there, or to sit on a field in a folding chair in anything but the balmiest weather for any longer than 60 minutes" (*Wall Street Journal*). It is clear from her essay that Waldman is a devoted and attentive parent, but she still resorts to such statements that reaffirms the idea of a lenient Western mother. Both Waldman and Chua perpetuate Chinese and Western stereotypes with a complacence that is hard to understand at times. Why are these mothers so willing to caricature their culture and parenting?

Waldman's essay demonstrates the divisive effect of both Chua's use of stereotypes and Chua's simplification of Chinese and Western parenting. For instance, Waldman recounts how her daughter Rosie overcame mild dyslexia "not because we forced her to drill and practice and repeat, not because we dragged her kicking and screaming, or denied her food, or kept her from the using the bathroom, but because she forced

herself." She is pointedly contrasting her daughter to Chua's daughters, who were forced to "drill and practice and repeat" and more specifically, Lulu, who was not allowed to use the bathroom until she mastered a piano piece (Waldman). "[Rosie] climbed the mountain alone, motivated not by fear or shame of dishonoring her parents but by her passionate desire to read," states Waldman. It seems that according to Waldman, to be self-motivated and to be motivated by fear or shame of disappointing one's parents are mutually exclusive and that the former is more respectable than the latter. However, such a categorization seems unfair to the children who are pushed by their parents, such as Chua's daughter Sophia.

Sophia disproves Waldman's argument through an essay that she wrote for school prior to Chua penning her book. In this essay, Sophia writes that just before her performance at Carnegie Hall, "I realized how much I loved this music" (Chua 140). That is, while Sophia may have followed her mother's rigidly enforced ninety minutes a day, seven days a week practice schedule because she was motivated by "fear or shame of dishonoring her parents," as Waldman would say, Sophia evidently grew a passion and a love for the piano that no one, not even Chua, could command her to develop. "Oftentimes training children fairly early to work very hard and be disciplined would be one way to foster their self-motivation," writes Professor Ruth K. Chao in her study "Beyond Parental Control and Authoritarian Parenting Style: Understanding Chinese Parenting Through the Cultural Notion of Training" (1117). That is, working hard from a young age may allow a child to see the benefits of doing so and thus, he may be inclined to set his own goals.

In contrast to Chua's simplified and stereotyped work, Chao delves into the cultural factors that have led these two cultures to develop distinct parenting styles. In her study, fifty immigrant Chinese mothers and fifty European-American mothers answered scales, or questionnaires, derived from "Block's 1981 Child Rearing Practices Report" (Chao 1114). After conducting the research, Chao concludes "that the concepts often used to describe Chinese parenting (i.e., 'authoritarian,' 'controlling,' or 'restrictive') have been rather ethnocentric and misleading" (1111). Chao dismantles these concepts by examining two Chinese terms: *chiao shun*, which "contains the idea of training (i.e., teaching or educating) children in the appropriate or expected behaviors" and *guan*, which Tobin et al. explain "literally means 'to govern'" but also can mean "'to care for' or even 'to love'" (qtd. in Chao 1112). She states that "the sociocultural traditions and values that have shaped [these] child-rearing concepts" do not exist in the West (1117). Furthermore, Chao found that even the word "training" itself triggered "very positive" associations for the Chinese mothers participating in her study, while the European American mothers associated "training" with words like "militaristic" or "regimented" (1117). These findings suggest the difficulties in classifying Chinese parenting in strictly American terms. Even the very same word, "training," evokes two very different responses in Chinese culture versus European-American culture. As Chao states, "These highly charged negative 'derivations' of

authoritarian [*sic*] have been applied to describe the parenting styles of individuals who in no way share this same historical and sociocultural context" (1117). Thus, Chao's analysis calls into question the disapproval expressed by critics of Chua who may not understand the cultural context of Chinese parenting. Chua's decision not to examine the cultural context in *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*, but merely present its striking features, is what lends the book to such controversy. Had Chua given her largely American readership a better idea of the cultural concepts that fashioned Chinese parenting, Chua and her critics would have been able to engage in a more informed discussion of the merits and drawbacks of Chinese and Western parenting.

Discussions of *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* will have implications that far exceed the scope of the book. The book comes at a time of heightened American anxiety about China becoming a formidable economic challenger to the United States. More significantly, Chua's book comes at a time when students from Shanghai came in first in every subject tested by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) while children from the United States placed 17th in reading, 23rd in science and 31st in math (*The Telegraph*). U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's statement in response to the PISA test results almost seems to be taken directly off a page of *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*. He says that U.S. students "express more self-confidence in their academic skills" than students in any other nation that participated in the PISA and that "this stunning finding may be explained because students here are being commended for work that would not be acceptable in high-performing education systems" (Ed.gov). While Secretary Duncan's comments deal with the 2009 test results, his speech is still relevant today because American students maintained this high self-regard in the most recent 2011 test results (*The Telegraph*). How we interpret these results is crucial: we cannot take a Chua-Waldman reading of these scores by assuming that all American students are thus lazier but have a higher sense of self-esteem than all Chinese students. Rather, by keeping Chao's study in mind, we can recognize the impact of culture on the parenting and education of both China and the United States.

No one culture holds the secret to successful parenting and even Chua herself recognizes this by the end of her book. After recounting an incident of dramatic rebellion from her daughter (involving chopping off her hair to just below her ear and smashing a glass in a restaurant), the author considers the possibility that there are merits in both Chinese parenting and Western parenting (Chua 174, 205–206). Indeed, Chua now allows Lulu to participate in improv, a very "American" pursuit, admitting, "I'm still in the fight, albeit with some significant modifications to my strategy" (221).

In his essay, "The Case for Contamination," Kwame Anthony Appiah, a professor at Princeton University, discusses how society accepts contentious concepts, such as women entering "learned professions" like law or medicine and poses the question, "Isn't a significant part of it just the consequence of our getting used to new ways of doing things?" (52). Indeed, society began to accept the idea of women entering

learned professions mostly because more and more women entered learned professions. Yet if we are to get used to "new ways of doing things," such as adopting Chinese parenting concepts, we must remove the stigma, get past the stereotypes, and promote a freer exchange of ideas through "conversations that occur across cultural boundaries" (Appiah 23). Chua and her book spurred "conversations," but not the kind that brings about change. Rather, these conversations reinforced the boundaries between Chinese and Western cultures. Perhaps, if we can get past the hyperbole and Chua's dramatics in *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*, we will discover ideas that transcend the boundaries of culture: hard work and parents wanting the best for their children. What we must do, then, is to move away from a discourse of stereotypes and generalizations and toward an informed conversation that recognizes the specific cultural traditions and values that have shaped the parenting style of each culture. Through such a conversation, we will be able to better recognize the merits of both parenting styles.

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